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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of three integrated studies initiated by principal/researchers in an elementary, middle, and high school. The purpose of integrating the studies was to compare and contrast teacher leadership in the following areas: characteristics of teacher leadership, motivation for teachers to assume leadership roles, supports and constraints of teacher leadership, and the effects of teacher leadership on professional practices and school improvement. Using case study methodology with multiple sources of evidence, six identified teacher leaders from each site were studied. Similarities in findings indicated that: (1) teacher leaders have more years of teaching experience; (2) teacher leaders assume leadership roles for personal and professional reasons and increased involvement in decision making; (3) teacher leaders are supported by encouraging individuals, time, decision making/teaching empowerment, and professional opportunities; (4) teacher leaders are constrained by time, power, and politics; (5) teacher leadership improves professional practice by encouraging collaboration and decision making; (6) teacher leadership assists in school improvement efforts by recognizing and utilizing teachers' views and voices. Differences at the three levels showed up in the perception and role of teacher leadership, and activities in and responsibilities of teacher leadership. General conclusions indicated that teacher leadership is dependent on a supportive culture, enhanced by a voice in decision making, and constrained by the lack of time and the egalitarian ethic among teachers. (Contains 62 references) (Author/ND)

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Commonalities and Differences in Teacher Leadership at the Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels

by

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Abstract

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This paper reports the findings of three integrated studies initiated by principal/researchers in an elementary, middle, and high school. The purpose of integrating the studies is to compare and contrast teacher leadership in the areas of characteristics of teacher leadership, motivations for teachers to assume leadership roles, supports and constraints of teacher leadership, and the effects of teacher leadership on professional practices and school improvement. Using case study methodology with multiple sources of evidence, six identified teacher leaders from each site are examined. Both similarities and differences in teacher leadership within the three levels are discussed. Similarities in findings indicate that (a) teacher leaders have more years of teaching experience; (b) teacher leaders assume leadership roles for personal and professional reasons and increased involvement in decision making; (c) teacher leaders are supported by encouraging individuals, time, decision making/teacher empowerment, and professional opportunities; (d) teacher leaders are constrained by time, power, and politics; (e) teacher leadership improves professional practice by encouraging collaboration and decision making; (f) teacher leadership assists in school improvement efforts by recognizing and utilizing teachers' views and voices. Findings identify differences at the three levels in the perception and role of teacher leadership, and activities in and responsibilities of teacher leadership. General conclusions indicate that teacher leadership is dependent on a supportive culture, enhanced by a voice in decision making, and constrained by the lack of time and the egalitarian ethic among teachers.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, educators have engaged in a flurry of activities aimed at school reform and school improvement. School reform reports, Teachers for the 21st Century and Tomorrow's Teachers, both published in 1986, made strong, compelling arguments for teachers to provide leadership in schools. These reports called for the creation of a professional environment for teachers that expanded teacher decision making power into schoolwide leadership activities. They proposed a variety of roles for teachers which would provide teachers with greater opportunities to influence both practice and change in schools.

Teacher leadership is now a key element in improving the teaching profession and school reform (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Lieberman, 1995). This element is especially apparent with the increase in shared decision making, site-based management, collaboration, teacher-driven curriculum and staff development, and teacher professionalism which remove school leadership from the exclusive domain of the principal. Much of what teachers do as decision makers in the school propels them into leadership roles (Murphy, 1995).

A range of teacher leadership roles are encouraged (Lieberman & Miller, 1994; Smylie, 1992; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). They include master teachers, "lead" teachers, mentors, teacher-led advisory groups, curriculum developers, staff development planners and presenters, and school reform experts. Teacher leadership roles empower teachers to assume greater responsibility in their professional worklives and school improvement efforts. The goal of this

empowerment is the achievement of collaborative management and of responsibility for the school.

As schools work through school improvement and restructuring issues while trying to improve the teaching profession, teacher leadership is a critical component. Lieberman (1992b) relates this importance in the following statement:

> As the move to restructure schools continues, it is becoming increasingly evident that teacher participation in leadership may be the most critical component of the entire process of change. What we are beginning to see is that teacher involvement in their own learning has powerful effects on students, on the culture of the school, and on teachers' own sense of efficacy. (p. 159)

Another reason for the importance of teacher leadership in restructuring and change efforts to improve schools is that change efforts are multi-faceted and require the leadership, "buy-in," and the work of many, not just the principal.

During the past 10 years there has been increased research on teacher leadership. However, there has not been inquiry in how teacher leadership differs or is similar within elementary, middle, and high schools. To fill this void, three case studies (Horejs, 1996; Lomas, 1997; Stone, 1996) are integrated to study teacher leadership--kindergarten through 12th grade.

Background

Historically, schools have been hierarchical, bureaucratic, top-down organizations that have not encouraged teacher leadership. As Troen and Boles (1994) explain:

> Teaching is not a profession that values or encourages leadership within its ranks. The hierarchical nature of public schools is based on the 19th century industrial model, with the consequent adversarial relationship of administration as management and teachers as labor. Like factory workers in the 1800s, teachers all have equal status. Leadership opportunities are extremely limited. (p. 275)

During the late 1980s reform documents made compelling recommendations for strengthening teaching as a profession. A report from the California Commission on the Teaching Profession (1985) proposed "restructuring the management of schools to involve teachers in decision making." A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie, 1986), said that without teacher support, "any reforms will be short lived," and the key to successful reform "lies in creating a new profession…of well-educated teachers prepared to assume new powers and responsibilities to redesign the schools for the future" (p. 2). The Holmes Report (1986) advocated the creation of professional schools that link university and school-based educators and a three-tiered career ladder consisting of role differentiation. Together, these two documents called for sweeping changes in existing educational policies in order to increase student achievement and professional opportunities that value the teacher.

Current literature on teacher leadership explains that teacher leadership opportunities empower teachers to assume greater responsibility in their professional worklives. "The advocacy for teacher leadership," writes Howey (1988), "stems from the proposition that what is fundamentally needed are highly

competent leaders who reside where the problems primarily are, in schools, and who can address these in a continuing, collective manner" (p. 30).

Teacher leadership is now imbedded in the school reform movement. Within the last 10 years, several school districts and state departments have developed and experimented with various types of teacher leadership such as mentor teacher, lead teacher, and master teacher. Teacher leadership is not confined to the local, state, and national level; it has also emerged in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Spain (Smylie, 1995).

Smylie (1995) suggests that teacher leadership initiatives attempt to achieve three objectives.

1. Initiatives seek to enhance the quality of the workforce by expanding the nature of the teachers' work, thereby providing a wider variety of incentives to attract and keep the most talented teachers in the profession.

2. Initiatives seek to establish new opportunities for professional development aimed to improve the practicing teachers.

3. Initiatives seek to improve school performance by placing teachers in positions of leadership and decision making, thereby increasing expertise available for school improvement.

Over the last 10 years, teacher leadership roles have changed significantly. In the past, teachers served as curriculum leaders, department chairs, and association leaders. With the exception of association leaders, most of the leadership roles were confined to the classroom rather than expanded to schoolwide involvement. Many of the leadership roles existed at the prerogative of the principal and few involved collegial relationships with other teachers (Livingston, 1992).

With the increased interest in site-based management and shared decision making, avenues have been created to expand teacher leadership. According to Fay (1992), teacher leadership is a strong indicator of teacher empowerment. For empowerment, teachers must achieve "status, knowledge, and access to decision making" (Maeroff, 1988, p. 473). Fay (1992) describes the connection between teacher leadership and teacher empowerment:

> Leadership roles empower teachers to actualize their professional worth in concrete, fundamental ways: sharing their unique experience and expertise with one another, developing new skills with colleagues for improving their schools, and designing actual roles that both promote these functions and maintain the centrality of their teaching. (pp. 58-59)

Teacher leadership also plays a key role in restructuring and the professionalization of teaching. Changing a school requires the energy and skills of many; principals learn quickly that they can not supply all the leadership. Restructuring philosophy calls for shared leadership and responsibilities by teachers. Lieberman (1992b) makes the connection between the restructuring movement and the professionalization of teaching:

> Today the move to restructure schools to make them more learner-centered is being coupled with the powerful move to professionalize teaching. The dual goals then--to rethink how schools are organized to deal with the student as the center, while changing the way teachers participate is nothing short of revolutionary. We are not talking about a simple new intervention, but rather the changing of a whole culture. (p. 160)

The driving force behind the current interest in teacher empowerment is the desire for improved school effectiveness. As cited in recent reform initiatives, conditions for school improvement include the involvement of all stakeholders in the educational enterprise. Following the model set by business and industry efforts, authority-based management is being replaced with participatory management. The assumption is that shared power strengthens the school as an organization.

Research tells us that teachers have the expertise and experience to engage in all aspects of schooling; therefore, they should be given the opportunity to engage in meaningful decisions about their schools and classrooms. Glickman (1990) states that when teachers are given the responsibility to make educational decisions in an information-rich environment, they will work harder and smarter on behalf of the students. When schools involve teachers more fully in all aspects of schooling, the result is more professional working conditions for the teachers--conditions similar to those of law and medical professions (Blaze, 1995; Kelly, 1994). The assumption is that teaching is professionalized by increasing collegiality and responsibility of all teachers. The desired end of creating a more professional work environment is that talented people would be attracted to and remain in the profession.

Purpose and Significance of the Studies

Three case studies (Horejs, 1996; Lomas, 1997; Stone, 1996) of teacher leadership were initiated in Northern California (1995-96) by three principal/researchers in an elementary, middle, and high school. Although each study differed slightly in focus, the researchers agreed on primary questions,

validation methodology, and collaborative interpretation. The purpose of integrating the studies is to compare and contrast teacher leadership in the areas of characteristics of teacher leadership, motivations for teachers to assume leadership roles, supports and constraints of teacher leadership, and the effects of teacher leadership on professional practices and school improvement. The significance of this study is that the results will contribute to the limited body of knowledge concerning the similarities and differences of teacher leadership within the three levels. The results will also provide information to assist teachers and administrators in designing conditions which cultivate and sustain teacher leadership.

The Framing Questions

The integration of the three exploratory case studies is guided by the overall framing question: What are the commonalities and differences in teacher leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels? To investigate this focus question, a set of subquestions were developed. They include the following:

1. Who are the teacher leaders?
2. How do teachers define or perceive teacher leadership?
3. In what leadership activities do teacher leaders engage?
4. How are teacher leadership positions designed, and who selects the leaders?
5. Why do teachers assume a leadership role?
6. What are the desired outcomes of teacher leadership?
7. What factors/structures support or constrain teacher leadership?
8. In what ways does teacher leadership improve professional practice?

9. In what ways does teacher leadership assist in school improvement?

Delimitations of the Study

The scope of these studies is limited to the perceptions of the 18 teacher leaders in three schools, their school-based colleagues, and the three principals. This study is also limited to the data collected during the 1995-96 school year.

Limitations of the Study

The principal/researcher at each school was both an insider and an outsider (participant and researcher); therefore, perceptions may be affected. The teachers in the studies were selected by the teaching staff at each site by means of a survey. The studies may not be generalized to other elementary, middle, or high schools.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purposes of this study:

Collegiality

Collegiality is defined as working together in a professional relationship to share expertise and develop practices and behaviors that are consistent with collaboratively-designed school goals.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the process whereby a teacher develops the competence to take charge of his or her own professional growth and decisions concerning professional practices.

Restructuring

Elmore's (1990) definition of restructuring is used, that is, restructuring has three main dimensions: (a) changes in the way teaching and learning occur; (b)

changes in the occupational situation of educators (e.g., school structure, conditions of work, decision making processes; and (c) changes in the distribution of power between schools and clients or the school governance structure.

School-based Management

School-based management is a system of providing individual school personnel opportunities for greater control over issues such as budgetary matters, instructional practices, and curricular decisions that have previously been the domain of central office administrators.

School Improvement Process

This process is a school's method of assessing its progress toward school goals, outcomes, and expected schoolwide learning results.

Review of Literature

Teacher leadership has become a key element in recent initiatives to improve the teaching profession and assist in school reform (Smylie, 1995). Beginning with "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), several reform initiatives emerged. There were strong recommendations for teachers to provide leadership and increase their involvement in the reform process. The intent of these initiatives was to promote teaching as a professional practice, enhance the workplace, and improve the educational institution by empowering teachers and diminishing the bureaucratic structure (Blase & Blase, 1994; Conley, 1991; Glickman, 1990; Lieberman, 1988; Little, 1988). The goal behind expanding the teacher's role in the workplace was that teacher job satisfaction would improve and more teachers would stay in the profession.

Teacher isolation, long imbedded in the school culture, inhibits the teaching profession by limiting the teachers' ability to learn from one another. Lortie (1975) found that teacher isolation limits access to ideas, fails to recognize and praise success, and permits incompetence to exist. Teachers have few opportunities to interact with colleagues and the principal. Troen and Boles (1994) argue that teacher isolation with its "secretive and competitive aspects" must be replaced by collaboration and risk taking. When this occurs, teacher leadership will emerge.

During the early 1980s, corresponding with the first-wave reforms, several significant reports were published highlighting the dismal conditions of the American classroom. Three of the most significant studies were done by Boyer (1984), Goodlad (1984), and Sizer (1984). The common theme of these reports was the concern for the uneven quality of American education and the lack of substantial teaching and learning in the classroom. All three reports drew national attention to schools and teachers, called for the strengthening of schools, and stimulated significant, creative change in schools.

Whereas the first wave emphasized control and "top down" mandates, the second wave emphasized autonomy, professionalism, and "bottom-up" participation of teachers and principals in restructuring schools (Boyd, 1990; Lieberman, 1992a). The formal beginning of the second wave came with the publications of the Carnegie Commission report entitled A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century and the Holmes Group Report on Tomorrow's Teacher, both published in 1986. Both reports drew national attention and made compelling recommendations for teachers to provide leadership in restructuring our nation's schools. More importantly, they emphasized the creation of new

teacher roles and professional opportunities that acknowledged the value of the teacher. They stressed the need for teachers to assume professional responsibilities and to assist in the redesign of both teachers and schools.

With the reform initiatives and the move to decentralize and flatten the hierarchical organization of the school came the changing school and changing roles of the administrator and teacher. Schools began moving toward a sharing of power and decisions rather than the traditional "top-down" structure (Murphy, 1995). In this structure, principals diffuse power rather than control it; they encourage teachers to become leaders; and they invite the school community to share decisions, develop vision, and assist in solving problems. Many teachers assume leadership roles and take an active role in school redesign. When this occurs, teachers are perceived as more professional (Bredeson, 1995).

With the increase in teacher leadership, teachers and researchers began to define the role. Although there are few studies that provide "systematic conceptual" definitions (Smylie, 1995), there are some commonalities in the various definitions used. From both the teachers' and researchers' points of view, a teacher leader is one who provides help, support, and motivation to other teachers, acts as a catalyst to other teachers' learning, is well-educated, and has several years of experience. A teacher leader enhances his or her professional learning in the course of assuming a leadership role.

Common characteristics of a teacher leader include more teaching experience and more formal education than the average teacher (Brownlee, 1979; Troen & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991; Wasley & McElliott, 1989). Most teacher leaders tend to teach in the classroom full-time or part-time as they fulfill their leadership

responsibilities (Howey, 1988; Lieberman, 1988; O'Connor & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991). They have learned their leadership role by doing it (Gehrke, 1991). Most teacher leaders also have good interpersonal relationships with other teachers which enable them to develop trust and rapport with others, and they use facilitative and collaborative skills on a regular basis (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988).

Because of the second-wave reform movement, teacher leadership roles have expanded. They include, but are not limited to, designing and conducting staff development; engaging in peer-coaching activities; serving as mentors, lead teachers, master teachers, and consultants; developing and refining curriculum; participating and leading school-based management and schoolwide improvement activities; facilitating meetings; managing budgets; conducting research, developing professional growth plans; and creating partnerships with the community.

Research is limited in the area of motivation. However, most teacher leaders are motivated to assume a leadership role because of their desire to improve the school, the district, or both (Smylie, 1995). Many are dissatisfied with the conditions or curriculum (Trachtman, 1991; Troen & Boles, 1992). Some are motivated by a personal desire to assist colleagues, grow professionally, or other incentives (Ainscow & Southworth, 1994; Chen, 1991; Firestone, 1991; Hatfield, Blackman, & Claypool, 1986; Troen & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991).

Studies have found that outcomes from teacher leadership generally fall into two categories: personal benefits and organizational outcomes (Smylie, 1995). Several studies demonstrate varying aspects of strong personal benefits (Ainscow & Southworth, 1994; Kenney & Roberts, 1984; Kilcher, 1992; O'Connor & Boles,

1992; Rinehart & Short, 1993; Trachtman, 1991; Troen & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991). Personal benefits include knowledge and skill development, increased self-confidence, professional growth, commitment to the project, and job satisfaction. Organizational outcomes encompass authority changes between teacher leaders and administrators (Cooper, 1993; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Some studies show an enhancement of the professional climate of the school by expanding teacher-administrator communication and teacher collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Hertzog, 1995; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Trachtman, 1991, 1993); while other studies contradict this notion and suggest that increased teacher-administrator communication may have negative effects (O'Connor & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991). The research also indicates that teacher leaders play important roles in program development and change (Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991).

There are negative effects of teacher leadership such as absence from the classroom, stress from working with administrators and other teachers, the time commitment, and the frustration of trying to successfully carry out both teacher and leadership responsibilities. Studies indicate that teacher leaders often experience ambiguity in trying to figure out what their leadership role actually is.

Findings at the classroom level are mixed. There is little evidence that projects initiated by teacher leaders are very successful over time (Kenney & Roberts, 1984; Wasley, 1991). Studies have not shown that teacher leadership has resulted in any measurable student achievement (Trachtman, 1991).

Research on constraints and supports is abundant. Time is the biggest constraint, along with dual responsibilities for teaching and leading, non-

supportive principals and teachers, needed skills and knowledge, teacher isolation, egalitarian philosophy, role confusion, and union conflicts. Support includes release time, extra pay, supportive principals and teachers, professional growth, and teacher collaboration and collegiality.

Factors functioning as both constraints and supports may include individuals, role confusion, the school context, organizational factors, knowledge and skills, or norms connected to teaching. Ironically, constraints and supports are often two sides of the same coin; those conditions that provide support can also constrain depending on the situation.

Several unanswered questions arise from the literature review:

1. Do teacher leaders at elementary, middle, and high school levels agree on what motivates teachers to assume leadership roles?

2. Do teachers consciously seek leadership roles or do leaders emerge?

3. How do teacher leaders at the three levels define teacher leadership?

4. How do teachers think leadership positions are designed?

5. Does it make a difference to the teacher leader as to who designs the role or position?

6. What specific factors and structures support teacher leadership at the three levels?

7. How does participative decision making affect teacher leadership?

8. What are the formal and informal roles of teacher leaders and on what activities do they spend most of their time?

9. How do teacher leaders at each level contribute to school improvement?

10. How do teacher leaders at each level think teacher leadership improves professional practice?

Methodology

Each of the three integrated studies (Horejs, 1996; Lomas, 1997; Stone, 1996) utilized case study methodology. Eighteen teacher leaders from Northern California were studied by three research colleagues. The 18 included six elementary teachers from a suburban elementary school, six middle school teachers from an urban middle school, and six high school teachers from a suburban high school. On a survey, the teachers from each site selected six teachers whom they perceived as teacher leaders. The subjects of the case studies were the six teachers most frequently identified. Case study methodology was selected to add depth and breadth to the analysis. Triangulation, both within each study through a combination of methodologies and among the three studies by the three research colleagues, assisted in providing confidence in the authenticity of the conclusions. To insure construct validity, multiple sources of evidence were used; a chain of evidence established; and research colleagues assisted in interviewing, interpreting data, and verifying the findings. Pattern matching, explanation-building, and time-series analysis were done to establish internal validity. To build reliability, the case study protocol was used and a database developed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The study was initiated without any preconceived notions about the findings. Observations of the subjects were recorded over time and in a variety of settings. Observations and interview responses were submitted to the participants for review of accuracy. Multiple observers and interviewers were used to remove

the potential bias that comes from single-person observations and interviews. Data were corroborated by eliciting perceptions from teacher leaders, colleagues, and administrators, each of which had the opportunity to validate the perceptions of others. Standard procedures for collecting and recording data were strictly followed and implications for both rhetoric and real practice were evident.

Extensive data were collected from the 18 teacher leaders, the teaching staff, and administrators to produce an in-depth understanding of teacher leadership. Each study included 12 different data sources: (a) Teacher Leadership Survey for Teachers, (b) teacher leader interviews, reflective response, (c) informal interviews and discussions with teacher leaders, (d) informal interviews with colleagues of the teacher leaders, (e) principal's interview, (f) focus group discussion, (g) principal's journal, (h) documentation, (i) archival records, (j) direct observation, and (k) participant observation. The survey contained multiple-choice and open-form questions which elicited personal information, professional information, and views on teacher leadership. At the high school level, 62 teachers (78%); at the middle school level, 22 teachers (76%); and at the elementary school level, 19 teachers (100%), completed and returned the surveys. Surveys were kept confidential, none were given codes. The purpose of using participant observation was to present an opportunity to perceive reality from the view point of someone "inside" the case study. A matrix containing research questions and instruments is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Matrix of Questions, Sources, and Means

Questions	Source	Means
1. Who are the teacher leaders?	Teaching staff Classified personnel Administrators	Survey Interview Focus group
2. How do teachers define or perceive teacher leadership?	Teacher leaders Teaching staff Administrators	Survey Interview Archival records
3. In what leadership activities do teacher leaders engage?	All teachers Teacher leaders Principal Assistant principals	Reflective response Survey, interview Direct observation Video/archivalrecords
4. How are teacher leadership positions designed, and who selects the leaders?	Teacher leaders Teaching staff Principal Assistant principals	Reflective response Survey Interview Direct observation Principal's journal
5. Why do teachers assume a leadership role?	Teacher leaders Teaching staff Administrators	Group reflective Principal response Survey Documentation Interview

Table 1 (continued)

Matrix of Questions, Sources, and Means

Questions	Source	Means
6. What are the desired outcomes of teacher leadership?	Teacher leaders Teaching staff Principal Assistant principals	Reflective response Survey Interview Direct observation Participant observation
7. What factors/ structures support or constrain teacher leadership?	Teacher leaders Teaching staff Principal Assistant principals	Group/principal Reflective response Survey Interview Principal's journal
8. In what ways does teacher leadership improve professional practice?	All teachers Teacher leaders Administrators	Reflective response Documentation Survey, observation Interview Principal's journal
9. In what ways does teacher leadership assist in the school improvement process?	All teachers Teacher leaders Administrators	Survey Interview Documentation Principal's journal

Findings

The following findings were the result of comparison and contrast of the investigations from the three studies done at the elementary (Horejs, 1996), middle (Lomas, 1997) and high school (Stone, 1996) of the research questions:

1. Who are the teacher leaders?

Teaching colleagues identified six teacher leaders at each site. At the elementary level all teacher leaders were female, the most experienced on the staff, and each was an acknowledged professional willing to accept responsibility. The average age was 42, and the average experience was 14 years. At the middle school level, five teachers were female and one was male. The six middle school teachers were older than the average teacher, more experienced, presenters at conferences and workshops, and from a variety of curriculum areas. The average age was 49 and the average experience was 26 years. Characteristics of the six high school teacher leaders included more teaching experience and more formal education than the average teacher on staff. The average age was 49 and the average experience was 25 years. The six high school teachers were able to build trust and rapport, examine issues from a global perspective, build confidence in others, and work collaboratively with other teachers. The findings from the three levels supported the research suggesting that teacher leaders have more experience (Brownlee, 1979), and the middle and high school findings support the research findings that teacher leaders have more formal education (Troen & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991). All 18 of the teachers supported previous research findings that teacher leaders may teach full- or part-time while assuming leadership roles (Howey, 1988; Lieberman, 1988; O'Connor & Boles, 1992; Wasley, 1991).

2. How do teachers define or perceive teacher leadership?

The elementary teachers defined teacher leadership in terms of a broad range of support activities including assisting others in their professional work, sharing in decision making, mentoring, and collaborating with colleagues for school improvement. At the middle school, many thought of themselves as facilitators for teachers and as individuals who are willing to take charge when needed. High school teachers defined a teacher leader as one who is respected by and represents others, an expert teacher, a risk taker, one who collaborates with colleagues, makes decisions, and works toward schoolwide improvement. The findings at the three levels support previous studies which identify support to other teachers as one of the primary goals of teacher leadership (Devaney, 1987; Hatfield et al., 1986; Wasley, 1989). Elementary, middle, and high school teachers all defined teacher leaders as those who are a catalysts to other teachers' learning, and those involved in decision making and collaboration.

3. In what leadership activities do teacher leaders engage?

The findings for elementary teacher leaders showed that the teacher leaders spent the majority of their time working with colleagues on a variety of professional activities such as staff committees, grade level leads, curriculum development, grant writing and implementation, and school site council. Middle school teachers identified collaboration/ sharing, collegial activities, staff development, mentoring, union activities, coaching, and club advisement. The six high school leaders engaged in formal and informal, as well as individual and shared, leadership roles. Their activities included leadership in school improvement, change efforts, staff development, curriculum and instruction, grant

writing, staff committees, mentoring, technology, collaboration, and collegiality. These findings support the research of Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) that shows teacher leaders employ skills that allowed them to build trust and rapport, examine issues of organizational context, and build skill and confidence in others, and work for change.

4. How are teacher leadership positions designed, and who selects the leaders?

At the elementary level, leadership positions were designed either by the site administrator or district administration, and the leaders were requested, elected, asked, or volunteered. At the middle school level, there were no formal leadership positions. Teachers took on leadership roles on a voluntary basis; they were not elected, selected, or invited. High school teachers thought leadership positions were designed by the teacher, the teacher and administrator through a collaborative process, laws or state guidelines, or negotiated such as department chair positions. Concerning the selection process, teachers were selected, elected, asked/invited, or volunteered for a role or position. Teachers at the high school level thought the design and selection process had no bearing on the success of the teacher.

5. Why do teachers assume a leadership role?

Teacher leaders at the elementary level reported that they assumed leadership roles because of the intrinsic satisfaction they received from filling a perceived need, such as assisting colleagues and engaging in an area of personal interest. Teacher leaders also identified personal benefits resulting from their leadership roles including accomplishment of meaningful work, increasing educational expertise, and having expanded influence. Middle and high school teacher leaders also cited intrinsic reasons as motivation to assume leadership

roles, including such things as personal challenge, seeing a need and filling it, personal characteristics of the teacher, willingness to get involved, and a perfectionist attitude. Previous studies support the findings that teachers assume leadership roles for personal reasons (Ainscow & Southworth, 1994; Kenney & Roberts, 1984; Kilcher, 1993; Short & Rinehart, 1993; Trachtman, 1991; Wasley, 1989).

Professional reasons were also cited for assuming leadership roles at all three levels. They include improving the teaching profession, becoming a catalyst to other teachers' learning, collaboration/collegiality, being able to see the big picture for school change, and growing professionally. A number of previous studies reported professional reasons for assuming leadership roles (Boles & Troen, 1992; Erandson & Bifano, 1987; Lieberman, 1988; Manthei, 1993; Trachtman, 1993).

An additional finding at all three levels shows that teacher leaders clearly identified their participation in decision making as a factor which motivated them to assume leadership responsibilities. Other reasons included leading the effort for school change and improvement, being encouraged and supported, emerging as part of a natural evolution, and being paid money to assist in the classroom.

6. What are the desired outcomes of teacher leadership?

At the elementary level, teachers identified shared decision making, collaboration, professional growth, improved school climate, and school improvement as the desired outcomes. Teachers at the middle school indicated that the overall desired outcome of teacher leadership was to make the school environment a better place for students. They also included shared decisions, collaboration, school improvement, fulfilling a personal need, and change. High

school teachers cited school improvement, improved school climate/work environment, professional growth, collaboration, shared decisions, change, and improved governance. These findings partially support the data from Ainscow and Southworth (1994) which suggests that the strongest benefit of teacher leadership is professional learning. These findings also support the research indicating "improved attitude toward work" (as cited in the research of O'Connor & Boles, 1992) as a desired outcome.

7. What factors/structures support or constrain teacher leadership?

Findings cited that the factors/structures at the elementary level which both supported and constrained teacher leadership were administration, colleagues, shared decision making, and time. These conditions could be both a positive or a negative. For example, an administrator could be very supportive, yet create more work for the teacher leader. Teachers indicated that personal benefits, professional growth opportunities, and experience were the greatest supports. Workload, role ambiguity, and the union were identified as the major constraints. At the middle school level, time and administrative support were identified as crucial to the success of the teacher leadership role. The teachers cited support from colleagues and administrators, a good working climate, compensation, shared decision making/empowerment, being seen as a leader, and access to professional opportunities as supports for teacher leadership. Constraints included lack of time, lack of climate conducive to teacher leadership, lack of support, school and district politics, a conflict with teaching, lack of compensation, and personal constrains. All six of the high school teacher leaders indicated two areas of strong support for teacher leadership. The first area included support individuals such as

teacher colleagues and administrators who support, encourage, and recognize the teacher leaders. The second are an alignment between the teachers' and administrator's perception as to who the teacher leaders in the school are. This notion of alignment was not mentioned in previous research. From the composite of all high school teachers, supports for teacher leadership included personal skills/benefits, support individuals, compensation (especially time), improved school climate, and decision making/teacher empowerment. Constraints included time, lack of supportive individuals, lack of supportive climate, power and politics, conflict between teaching and teacher leadership, and lack of compensation. Previous research (Wasley, 1991; Hertzog, 1995) supports "time" as both a support and a constraint. The need for supportive individuals, including administrators and colleagues, also supports previous research (Boles, 1992; Hart, 1994; Lieberman, 1995; O'Connor & Boles, 1992; Trachtman, 1991; Troen & Boles, 1992).

8. In what ways does teacher leadership improve professional practice?

Teachers at the elementary level reported that teacher leadership improves professional practice by giving teachers a voice in decisions, improving curriculum offerings and instructional practices, improving working relationships, and increasing collaboration among the staff members. Middle school teachers indicated that teacher leadership improves professional practice through their collaboration with colleagues, school improvement, personal and professional growth, professional role models, desire to make change, and encouragement to others. The high school teacher leaders perceived that teacher leadership enhanced professional practice by valuing teachers' views, empowering teachers to make

decisions, and by increasing collaboration. At a personal level, it increased a teacher's knowledge and risk-taking skills. The teaching staff suggested that teacher leadership improves professional practice by trusting teachers to share in the decision making process, providing professional models, improving the school climate, and elevating the teaching profession. This finding supports current research on the importance of collegiality in the improvement of professional practice (Lemlech, 1995; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988; Little, 1990).

9. In what ways does teacher leadership assist in school improvement?

Elementary teachers identified teacher leaders' participation in shared decision making, curriculum and instruction activities, and collaborative working relations at the site as key to school improvement. Evidence at the middle school level indicates that new relationships between the teacher leaders and their colleagues and with the principal are key to efficacy. Using teachers as leaders is necessary to the school improvement process because teachers know the classroom, the students, and the curriculum. Furthermore, teacher leaders share common values and beliefs with other teachers, and they have a "bottom-up," "teacher-and-kids-first" orientation--qualities that recent school reforms value. At the high school level, data indicated that teacher leaders assist the school improvement process by leading teachers through the change process. Since teacher leaders are well respected, other teachers follow their model and their initiative in school improvement. In addition, teacher leadership recognizes and utilizes teachers' views and voices in the decision making process, thus bringing higher status to the profession.

Conclusions

Conclusions Across Sites

Based on the findings, several conclusions are found at all three sites.

1. To cultivate and support teacher leadership, the culture of the school has to be set in such a way that hierarchical differences are diminished, thus enabling teachers to have professional autonomy and genuine collegial involvement in decisions.

2. Collaboration and collegial activities enhance teacher leadership and professional practice, however, more time and opportunities must be found to accommodate collaborative activities.

3. The cultivation of teacher leadership takes several years.

4. Principals and district office personnel must find creative ways to fund release time for teachers to enable teacher leaders to carry out their leadership responsibilities.

5. Because of the egalitarian ethic among teachers, teacher leaders walk a very fine line between being seen as a leader of teachers and being viewed as an outsider.

6. To promote teacher leadership and professionalism, educators must acknowledge the tremendous accomplishments of teachers and recognize, respect, and value their expertise.

7. Teachers assume leadership roles primarily because of personal, intrinsic reasons.

Specific Site Conclusions

The following conclusions are unique to specific sites.

Elementary School.

1. Teachers need to have input into the design of leadership roles to ensure that they are meaningful and relevant to them.

2. Elementary teachers view accomplishments solely in terms of their classroom or grade level rather than as a part of a change effort or school improvement.

3. Elementary teachers do not view themselves as "leaders;" instead, they define their leadership role in terms of willingness to serve or "servant leadership."

4. Elementary teachers understand that the principal is a pivotal player in teacher leadership; however they do not openly articulate this notion because of their lack of experience and knowledge of systems.

Middle School.

1. Middle school teachers view accomplishment in terms of improving school climate rather than making a connection to school improvement.

2. Middle school teachers understand that the principal is a pivotal player in teacher leadership; however, they do not openly articulate this view because they have not made the connection between the principal and teacher leadership.

High School.

1. Teacher leaders are more effective when they are perceived as leaders by both the principal and the teachers.

2. Teacher leadership roles have expanded from teacher-to-teacher assistance, classroom and department focus, and staff development, to include an emphasis on global, schoolwide change and school improvement.

3. The principal is the pivotal player in teacher leadership in that he or she must be willing to share power, encourage teacher leadership, and set a tone that validates teachers' views and expertise.

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